

1
this one's for Anne's
marriage to Louis
full of trills and
colours stark
hyens rabbits
unicorn's horn in
a stream to show
up poison, nothing
an simple as this

FINGER

PRINT



2
here some places of
cloth are missing
but we know none of
her rings. (was
has eaten by an
spread over, com
keep it from
does Anne comp
rings her sile
32 and buying
velvet to wear
Charles dies, is she
already thinking of
Louis' fingers on the
skin where the dice
and gold cloth stops
Lyn

LYN

LIFSHIN

3
the notes say now we
know his long
but no one is sure what
the squirrel means
Lyn

4
in the fourth
the flags are a new color
Anne looks older suddenly
as if she'd prefer to
people but couldn't change
that. Louis gold and yellow
in the background
people seem too large
for the castle
Lyn

LOOKING AT THE UNICORN TAPESTRIES

1

this one's for anne's
marriage to louis
full of fruits and
collars stags a
hyena rabbits a
unicorn's horn in
a stream to suck
up poison, nothing
as simple as it seems

2

here some pieces of
cloth are missing
but we know anne by
her rings. (was the
rug eaten by animals
spread over corn to
keep it from freezing)
does anne compare her
rings her sleeves,
22 and buying black
velvet to wear when
charles dies. is she
already thinking of
louis fingers on the
skin where the blue
and gold cloth stops

3

the notes say how we
know his long fingers.
but no one is sure what
the squirrel means

4

in the fourth
the flags are a new color.
anne looks older suddenly
as if she'd prefer fewer
people but couldn't change
that. louis gold and yellow
in the background. the
people seem too huge
for the castle

5

the marriage contract
sealed the unicorn
caught in chains. (does
anne dream the years
in front of these threads,
the beast tied to the
pomegranate tree, the
end and the beginning,
the ripening fruit in
the tree of her body

PULLING THE TOWER OF BABEL OUT OF DUST

out of the plains of
old mesopotamia
in the ruins of babylon

deep under a field of
water men are
reading wedge
shaped writing

the euphrates in the
distance sheep and
goats grazing in the
ruins of the palace
ringing of sheep bells

hammurabi and nebuchadnezzar
made love and died here
alexander the great
caught malaria
and couldn't leave

the bricks were lugged away
salt ate the stones
the hanging gardens

deep under the earth
now these rows of bulls
mythical beasts scaly
forked unicorns
with eagle claws

standing out in relief
from the flaking brickwork
their glazed colors
long since worn away

CHURCHWARDEN's ACCOUNT 1631 and 34 CHELUSFORD

to howlate for cobwebbing
the church's corners

for carrying roger price
out of the church
being excommunicated

and to mrs fry for making
the new curtains for
altering the old ones
with washing them

to howlate for his
year's wages for
looking to the boys

for 2 women for
making the church
clean by strewing
rushes

to antony burgess of
white chapel
for catching birds

to howlate also for
driving hogs out
of the church
yard to the pond

and to the mason for
guilding the rose
and thistle

and the ragged places in
the claws of the lion
and unicorn

WHO IS IT COMING BACK

the other night
one man pulled
me from some
one like meat
on sale

someone else
said lyn youve got
to make each
poem each
man matter more

as if it was
the last one,
dont spread
yourself so

thin. it seemed
strange i hadnt
thought i was
am i the same
girl here 10
years before

scared, hungry
who is it lying
in the grass alone
still wanting

wondering if
either man will
want her tonight

and why that
should matter so

AFTER THE READING

beer and
rye, the
what people
say to get
close or
just to
bed

i leaned
toward

how far away
are the
mountains
he kept
saying

could we
touch them

UP TO THIS POINT IT'S BEEN OK ONLY WELL NOW IT'S CONFUSING

the doctor, suddenly
he seems so
old, herding
me into this
dirty room, the
towels: I'm
wondering is the
red blood or
rouge
And why this
pink glass
full of scotch,
his lips
on my nipples

FAMILY

at night the
slashed cherry
stretches roots
deep under
the garage

revenge on my
grandfather
pits will
star his
night

and for
sinning with
the egg girl
50 years
back

the chickenhouse
grows wings
claws settle
on his
lips and
nothing
sleeps right

DRY GOODS

the sign still
says and
sons
but the
oldest fell or
jumped
summer 1920

after that i
didn't go so much
to shul
the other's living
in california

these undershirts i got
for 40 years you
didn't know
gutman's out of
business so
long raise he

says the woman hardly
moves leans into
a hill of
levis

we used to shut saturdays
listen he says
a bargain

downstairs the
walls sweat
50 years

PHOTOGRAPH

the three
kids in
knickers
the dog the
way those
trees still
ruin the
garage the
same ferns
apples the
road only
wider

the thin
belly fat
now the
one kid
dead at
forty

FAMILY

by summer
weeds covered the
charred hole where
the store burned
to nothing, march
just after the
old man died
my grandmother
more undone by well
i know which loss
and she had reasons,
all those years of
watching car lights
till morning
In the fall she
had them paint the
rooms white sighing
about how wood goes
quickly too as the
garage sank around
his blue 53 plymouth
It was so much
like ritual

PETS

yes he
liked my
fur my
dresses

wanted me to
live on his
nest and
write poems
about him

what he
said to me
making me
come was

like what
i say to
the cat

MARRIED

not the one she
wanted later he'd
call her kike but
the one who seemed
gentle and read
They had girls
and moved in with
her father then
she stopped
dancing He
hardly said
a thing
On the way to
the divorce he
died and then
she was sorry

SARATOGA

dark counter on
broadway early the
morning smell of
old wood a
woman her tight
lips scent of dark
cloth nobody comes
for the baths now
only these
gipsies monty
wooly would
sit out her
face looks
like it could
crack a charred
hole she says the
fires losses
there's nothing horses
now the beauty
gone smoke
her mouth
breaking
you know
but they
lived then

THESE DAYS

just fog
cabbages
getting blue
things like
yr shoes yr
hands swirl
by, dissolve
I'll be so hard
by winter if I
don't break

carrying bags full
of letters to no
one saying oslo
is beautiful

nobody in the room
30 years the
letters in the
3rd person

it was the first
time she'd talked to
anyone they
said when they
came to feed her
she laughed when
they asked about
her white teeth

sunday she
couldn't get up
from the floor

needles in her,
the purple bruise
spreading

later in the room,
just an address book
with no names

white gloves in
tissue a rolled
up painting called
china dream

they said there
comes a time when
death is better

the 5 photographs
had nothing on
them but 1899

the ten year old
girl in one
looking somebody
said a lot like
the old woman

DURER

with your apples
of sin and chaos

drawn to circassian
slave girls, whores

but you stayed cutting
the blocks of hard
wood in a cold
room in nurembourg

was it for that
chill that adam has
such huge leaves
on his penis

Colorless days when
it got dark early
painting yourself
as jesus

sun lute bells
and ladies
blurring in venice

Such long afternoons
growing crabs loons
knights and rabbits

wondering about
the flood that
would eat all men

Even your walrus
seems uneasy

eels half a
skinned rabbit

on an iron hook.
the grapes in

water blood
drying in sun

doors close.
rose stucco

2:40 we don't
say anything

to the one
other face

nothing just
the sea

moving shadows
of 3 girls

down the de
chirico streets,

lerchi

ONE OF 7 DEPRESSING THINGS

thinking about how just
writing the poem some
times is like putting
one that came back back
in an envelope again,
hoping it doesn't seem
like a thing gone over
too much and not wanted

nothing can stay inside
nights like this

women, their
hips leaning
into metal.
heavy air, a
storm maybe.

steps smell of
wet earth, beer
Summer in the
city the black
girls, their
tight asses
geraniums, stone
Shades slam
down you don't

want me because
i remind you
from the top
floor, glass
Nights like
this whatever
comes, comes

PULLING WHAT THERE WAS BACK:

one
photograph
in Maine a
letter. I
never could
call you
father or
pa, in
spite of
what they
said. Ben, who
knows what he
knows and
then it's late
(you with your little
book of
words too) I
wish one of us
hadn't been
so quiet

The Beginning of a Bibliographic Checklist for Lyn Lifshin

1. Why Is The House Dissolving? (September, 1968) Open Skull Press, 1379 Masonic Ave., San Francisco, CA 94117; 17.5 x 21.5 cm., stapled wrappers (white glossy stock with black offset lettering); 36 pp. mimeographed text; edition 500 copies. \$1.
¶ Photo of the poet on back cover. Book printed and edited by Brown Miller; contains 35 poems.
2. Leaves and Night Things (1970) Baby John Press, P. O. Box 2293, West Lafayette, IN 47906; 13.3 x 21.0 cm., stapled wrappers (ocher matte stock with black offset lettering); 24 pp. offset text; edition 500 numbered copies. \$1.
¶ Photo of the poet on last page of text. Book printed and edited by James Evans and John P. Miller; contains 21 poems. Inside and outside cover design by Iola J. Mills.
3. Black Apples (1971) The Crossing Press, New/Books, R.D. 3, Trumansburg, NY 14886; 15.0 x 23.0 cm., stapled wrappers (cream matte stock with black offset printing); 44 pp. offset text; edition unspecified. \$2 (rubber stamp, back cover).
¶ Photo of the poet on last page of text. Book edited by John Gill; contains 34 poems. Cover by Larry Paciello. Text drawing by Patrick Lane. SBN 0-912278-00-5
4. lady lyn (1971) Hey Lady supplement no. 15, Morgan Press, 1819 North Oakland Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202; 14.9 x 23.8 cm., stapled text, resin-glue-attached to wrappers (80 lb Avon white Kimberly cover stock with black printing on a circular white overlay, gold banding); 24 pp. letterpress text (Melior type, hand-fed Golding no. 7 press, Handschy and VanSon Ink; edition 300 numbered copies. Unpriced.
¶ Photo of the poet inside front cover. Text contains 15 poems.
5. Tentacles, Leaves (1972) Pyramid pamphlet no. 1, Hellric Publications, 32 Waverley Street, Belmont, MA 02178; 13.7 x 21.0 cm., stapled wrappers (olive green matte stock with black offset printing); 16 pp. offset text; edition unspecified. \$1.25.
¶ Text edited by Ottone M. Riccio. One eleven-part poem sequence (26 stanzas). SBN 0-912086-10-6

Other books in press or scheduled: Moving By Touch (Cotyledon Press), Museum (November Press), Mercurochrome Sun Poems (Charis Press), I'd Be Jeanne Moreau (Morgan Press).